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ABSTRACT

"The Goldfinch" is a periodical that introduces young children to various facets of Iowa history. Each issue has a different theme topic and a number of articles covering diverse aspects of the topic being addressed. This issue focuses on letters and letter writing. Featured articles discuss letters that illuminate historical events. The volume includes letters belonging to a woman who moved from Pennsylvania to Iowa around the time of the Civil War, Anne Frank and her Iowa pen pal, letters exchanged by an Iowa draftee and his wife during World War II, letters written by a group of pen pals at Iowa State University between 1918 and 1922, and letters of Laura Ingalls Wilder and her daughter. Student activities include writing to pen pals, making a quill pen, answering questions about Clara Hinton's diary, and a writing game. (BT)

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Letters and Letter Writing

ED 429 858

by

Millie K. Frese

Iowa State Historical Society, Iowa City

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THE Goldfinch

Iowa History for Young People

Volume 19, Number 3, Spring 1998

LETTERS & Letter Writing

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Dear Readers,

As a college student, I could count on weekly letters from my Grandma Kehrli. She wrote in pencil on a tablet of white paper, telling me everything that happened during the previous week and reminding me to stop in for ice cream and a card game next time I was in town. Rarely did she write about anything my journalism professors might have considered news. But it didn't matter. Those letters were an important connection to someone I loved, the next best thing to being with her.

Today, my family has a really big mailbox. We are optimistic, certain that something wonderful will come in the mail. It doesn't always happen, but six days a week, we hope that along with junk mail and bills will come a letter or, better yet, a package from far away.

SHSI (IOWA CITY)

Before e-mail and 32¢ stamps...

H.A. Olander was the first Stratford, Iowa mail carrier to own an automobile. He started using it on his route in 1909.

This issue of *The Goldfinch* takes you on a trip through time as letters tell stories of ordinary people–sometimes in extraordinary times.

Read this issue with the same anticipation as when you're expecting something really cool in the mail. Wait a minute–*The Goldfinch* is something really cool that comes in the mail! When you're done, drop me a line and tell me about *your* life and what you think about the stories you've read. My address is: 402 Iowa Avenue, Iowa City, Iowa 52242. Or e-mail me at mfrese@blue.weeg.uiowa.edu. I'm waiting to hear from you!

Sincerely yours,

Millie Frese

THE Goldfinch

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INTERIM EDITOR: Millie K. Frese
PUBLICATIONS DIRECTOR: Shaner Magalhães
EDITORIAL ASSISTANT: Lin Ly
ILLUSTRATION: Mary Moye Rowley
CONSULTING EDITORS: JoAnn Castagna, PhD, has a degree in American Studies and still writes letters by hand; Mary Evans, Education Specialist, Herbert Hoover Presidential Library; and Tyler O. Walters, Head, Special Collections Department, Iowa State University Library

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS: Debra Atkinson, Sarah Frese, Diane Nelson and Jan Wolbers

EDUCATORS' ADVISORY BOARD: Betty Arndt, Greenwood Elementary School, Des Moines; Gary Coffelt, Central Decatur Elementary, Decatur City; Linda Vandeventer, Harrison Elementary School, Davenport; Karla Willoughby, Hanawalt Elementary School, Des Moines

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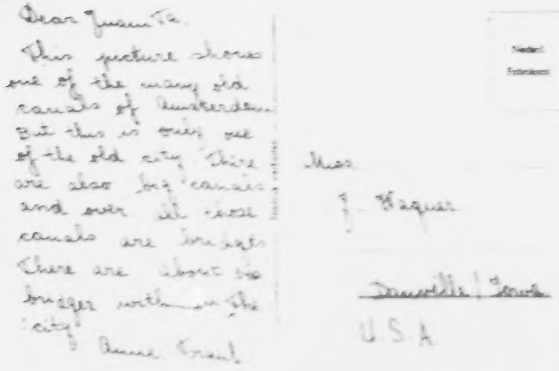
Dear Juanita,
This picture shows one of the many old canals of Amsterdam. But then in every part of the old city there are these long canals and over all these canals are bridges. There are about 100 bridges with in the city.
Anne Frank

Miss
J. Wagner
Danville Iowa
U.S.A

Read about Anne Frank's correspondence with her Iowa Pen Pal! Page 8

Courtesy of the Library Archives of the Simon Wiesenthal Center Museum of Tolerance

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Iowa Letters

Before telephones were common in Iowa homes, and fax machines and e-mail made communication instantaneous, people relied on letter writing to keep in touch with friends and family. Frontier Iowans often waited weeks–or months–for replies to their letters. Isolation was part of rural life, but letters helped relieve the loneliness.

Slow mail delivery was overlooked as letters dated weeks earlier were eagerly read for "news" of family and friends back East. "A letter from the East is of much importance to we poor exiles out here," wrote an Iowa settler to her mother in 1856. In another letter she begged her mother to write as often as possible because letters were like bread and molasses to a hungry child.

One advantage "old-fashioned" letters have over modern telephone calls: they can be saved and read over and over again. A letter writer in 1860 confided that her husband carried a family letter with him all the time. She believed when he got time to himself he read the letter and cried.

It takes more time to write words on paper than it does to say them out loud, but writing letters allows people to think through their ideas before putting them into words.

Most letters are meant to be read only by the person to whom they are addressed, but when letters survive through time, others read them to learn about history. Andrew Keachie Murray was a 41-year-old bachelor when he proposed to Margaret Martin Gordon, 27, in a letter.

"Pardon the liberty I now take in addressing you in this manner on a rather delicate subject," Murray wrote on February 15, 1854. "You are aware that I am an Old Bachelor very much in need of a partner to divide with me the cares and troubles of this life and to cheer and encourage me in the path that leads to a better life..."

Fourteen letters preserve details of Margaret's and Andrew's courtship. One hundred years later, their youngest son, Frederick, found the letters in a trunk stored in his Cedar Rapids attic.

Frederick's daughter, Eleanor Murray Shepherd, observed, "It might seem that we should not be reading other peoples' love letters, no matter how long ago they were written. But these letters are a legacy to us. That they were preserved, wrapped up and left in a trunk means that the writers felt they should be passed on."

During the Great Depression of the 1930s, people wrote letters to President and Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt begging for help. Today, those letters help readers understand the desperation people felt. In a June 1936 letter to Mrs. Roosevelt, a woman from Aurelia, Iowa, wrote, "I am coming to you for help.

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Photos Courtesy Wi

LETTERS & LETTER WRITING

by Millie K. Frese

Sometimes people wrote to President Roosevelt during the 1930s depression asking for help. These children from southeast Iowa are eating Christmas dinner (potatoes, cabbage and pie) in 1936.

Library of Congress, Farm Security Administration

Please do not think this does not cause a great feeling of shame to me to have to ask for old clothing...I think your clothes would fit me by your picture. Please do not think me unworthy, I am so badly in need..."

On September 11, 1934, a 72-year-old woman from Elkader, Iowa, begged President Roosevelt to help save her home. "No one else will help me...I am an old woman and...can't get around at all. So that makes it pretty hard for me to be put out of my home, the one I worked so hard for...If I could only raise thirteen hundred dollars then I could stay in my home...So please help me Mr. Roosevelt and answer right away or else it will be too late...I sure will try and pay you back."

Letters preserve history as it happens. In books, often written after an event, authors analyze what others have written. They interpret what happened by sorting through details and deciding which ones to include and which ones to leave out. While history books often describe the past in terms of famous people and important events, letters offer a more intimate look at ordinary lives. Letters surviving across time give voices to people whose lives might otherwise be lost to history. Who knows? Maybe the letters you write and receive today will be discovered in someone's attic 100 years from now. Future historians may study what you wrote to see what life was like in the late 20th century!

This red leather wallet holds the 14 courtship letters exchanged between Andrew and Margaret Murray. The wallet was found in a Cedar Rapids attic 100 years after the letters were written.

ley. Wallet photo by David F. Penney

My Dear Folks:

I am not going to pose before you as a physician, and I certainly have no cure-all for any disease...Most people...will keep well if they will look after two or three matters carefully. One is that the skin be kept clean. [A bath tub] is a nice thing to have, but it is not a necessity...All the appliances you need are a basin and a private room.

The next thing toward keeping well is to keep clean inside...If you will take plenty of exercise, eat the proper food...you will not be dirty inside. Wash yourself inside by drinking plenty of water...Don't imagine you are going to be sick, but instead believe you are going to be well.

Henry Wallace, editor of the Des Moines-based Wallace's Farmer Magazine from 1895 to 1916, wrote letters to his readers offering advice for living a good and moral life.

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History in a Shoebox

Emma Hoadley packed a small leather trunk for her journey from Pennsylvania to Iowa in 1873. Perhaps she emptied and repacked it many times to make sure the things she needed and treasured most would fit inside. Among the items she squeezed into the trunk were letters written by her brother during the Civil War.

Today, those letters bring Civil War times to life for Emma's granddaughter, Helen Evans.

Sept. 11, 1862

Dear Sister,

I am going to give you something of an idea of Camp Curtin: In the first place you will please imagine a field containing thirty or forty acres without a green thing growing upon it except a few small locust trees...this field has been nearly all covered with cloth tents...about 6 feet square at the bottom and running up to a sharp peak...Five of us make it our home...We cook our rations over a fire made in a hole dug in the earth...

Write as soon as you get this.

A. P. Hoadley

Illness, poor living conditions and inadequate nutrition were common problems in Civil War camps. Still, Augustus P. Hoadley considered fighting to preserve the Union his duty. He believed the common practice of hiring another man to fight in one's place was intolerable.

"Brink Canfield has hired David out for a substitute for two hundred and fifty dollars...That price wouldn't hire me to go to war...It would have required something more than money to separate me from the loved ones that I have left behind, it was a principal of duty, a principal which I hope I may always cherish as long as I live," A.P. wrote.

A.P. scolded Emma in his letter dated June 6, 1863. "I am surprised that you could not fill a whole sheet, there are thousands of things for you to write about...You don't say a word about any of the neighbors...Hasent father planted anything in the garden but beans? Why don't you tell me all about every thing? How much new fence has he made this spring..." He also asked about the chickens and goslings and wondered what became of the addition to their house Father was building. "You can answer these questions if you can't find anything more sensible to write."

I saved them because they are history.
–Helen Evans

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Story and photos
by Millie K. Frese

Detailed descriptions of plants and flowers filled A.P.'s letters to Emma. Once he enclosed a sprig of Virginia cloves. "Roses are in bloom...there are apples as large as robins' eggs, the cherries begin to turn red...It would be splendid down here if not for this terrible war."

A.P. fought in gruesome battles but spared his teenage sister from graphic details. But there was one tragedy he could not hide.

April 21st, 1865

Dear Sister,

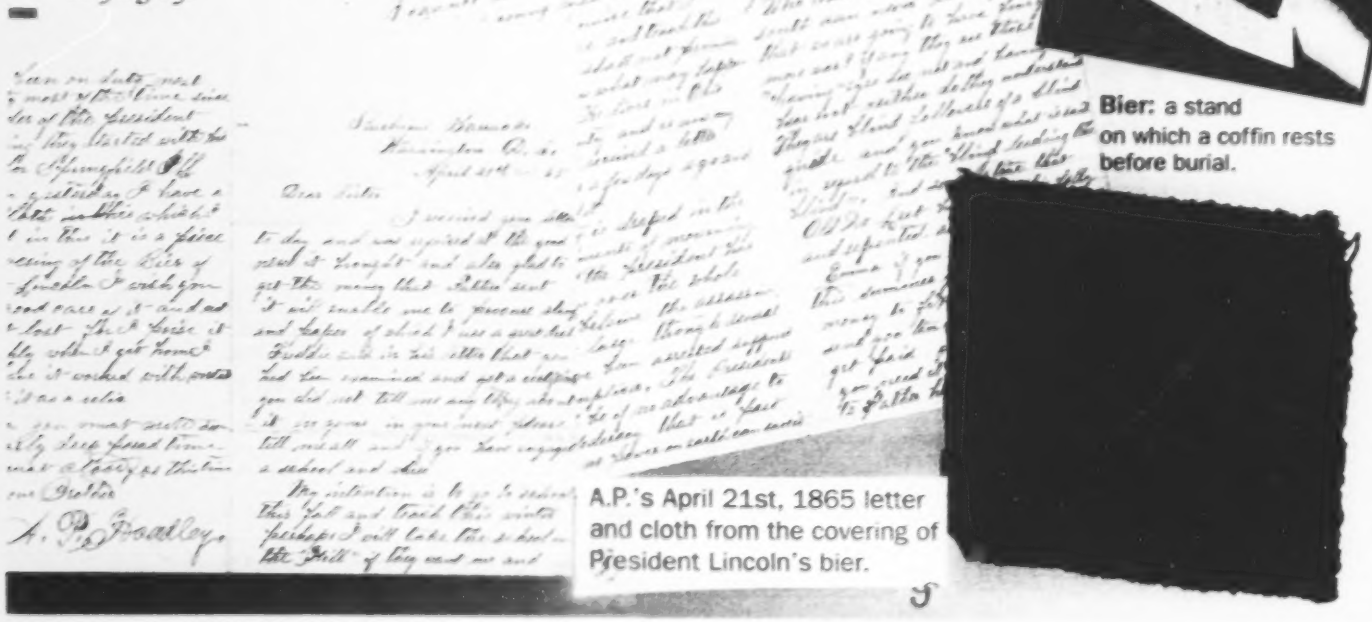
The city is draped in...mourning. The death of the President has cast a gloom over the whole nation...We have been on duty most of the time since the murder...This morning they started with his remains for Springfield, Ill. I saw him yesterday. I have a piece of cloth which I will send in this. It is a piece of the covering of the Bier of President Lincoln...I prize it very highly.

An historic moment is frozen in that small square of black fabric. Touching it brings that moment to life, rich in awe and tragedy.

A.P. taught school in Clarence, Iowa after the war. He died in 1869. How he died and where he is buried are mysteries Helen Evans wants to solve. Emma was 27 when she married Henry Brink and moved to Iowa in 1873. A.P.'s letters traveled through generations of Emma's family, eventually finding a home in a red shoe box in the attic of Evans' Mt. Vernon home.

"I saved them because they are history," Evans said. "I've always liked history."

Bier: a stand on which a coffin rests before burial.



A.P.'s April 21st, 1865 letter and cloth from the covering of President Lincoln's bier.

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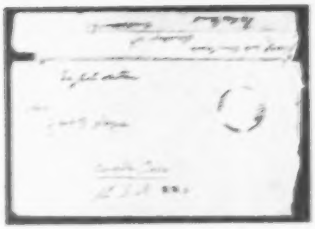
Postmarked from Amsterdam



Anne Frank and her Iowa Pen Pal

Juanita Wagner was a sixth-grade student at Danville Elementary School when she chose the name of a ten-year-old girl in the Netherlands from a list of potential overseas pen pals. It was autumn, 1939. World War II raged in Europe, and the Danville teacher who arranged for the letter exchange hoped the experience would open students' eyes to the world beyond this small, southeast Iowa town.

Little did Juanita know that her Amsterdam pen pal, Anne Frank, would become a symbol of the horror of the Holocaust–and the triumph of the human spirit.

In her first letter to Anne, Juanita wrote about Iowa, her mother (a teacher), sister Betty Ann, and life on their farm. When Anne wrote back, her sister Margot, 14, enclosed a letter for Betty Ann, also 14.

"We just wrote kid things," Betty Ann Wagner recalled. "It was such a special joy as a child to have the experience of receiving a letter from a foreign country and a new pen pal. In those days we had no TV, little radio and maybe a newspaper once or twice a week."

The Frank sisters wrote with ink on light blue stationery. Although the Amsterdam letters, dated April 27 and 29, 1940, were in English, experts believe the girls probably composed the letters in Dutch then copied their father Otto's English translation.

Anne wrote of her family, the Montessori school she attended and her postcard collection, enclosing a postcard of Amsterdam and school pictures of herself and Margot. She did not mention the war in Europe, but Margot told Betty Ann that "we often listen to the radio as times are very exciting, having a frontier with Germany and being a small country we never feel safe."

Juanita and Betty Ann answered Anne's and Margot's letters immediately, but replies never came. Betty Ann thought that perhaps mail was restricted or censored. They did not know the Franks were Jewish and in grave danger as Hitler's army advanced.

Anne wrote her only letter to Juanita just three weeks after Germany invaded Denmark and Norway. On May 10, 1940, eleven days after Anne's letter left Amsterdam, the Dutch surrendered to the Nazis.

Jews in Holland as elsewhere suffered the effects of Hitler's harsh anti-Jewish measures. Anne turned 12 in 1941. By then Jews were required to attend separate schools, carry identification cards stamped with a "J" and were restricted from business activities. The deportation of Holland's Jews to extermination camps soon began.

On July 5, 1942, Margot was ordered to report for deportation. A day later, the Frank family went into hiding in the rear part of the building where Otto Frank had operated a food products business. The door to the "Secret Annex," as Ann called it, was

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Betty Ann Wagner

hidden behind a bookcase in one of the offices. Aided by loyal friends who still worked in the offices outside their Secret Annex, the Franks remained in hiding for 25 months, sharing the space with four others.

German police arrested the eight Jews living in the Secret Annex on August 4, 1944. They were later transported to Auschwitz, the infamous Polish death camp. Margot and Anne were transferred to Bergen-Belson in October. The war ended in 1945. Otto Frank was the only member of his family who survived.

After the war, Betty Ann wrote to Anne's address in Amsterdam. She received a handwritten letter from Otto telling of his family's experiences in hiding and of Anne's death in a concentration camp. Betty Ann, then a teacher in Illinois, took Otto's letter to school and read it to her students. "I wanted them to realize how fortunate they were to be in America during World War II," she said.

The Frank family took few possessions with them into hiding. In her diary, Anne wrote, "Margot and I began to pack some of our most vital belongings into a school satchel. The first thing I put in was this diary, then hair curlers, handkerchiefs, schoolbooks, a comb, old letters; I put in the craziest things with the idea that we were going into hiding. But I'm not sorry, memories mean more to me than dresses."

Perhaps among the letters she packed was one from Juanita Wagner postmarked Danville, Iowa

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Adapted from a story by Shelby Myers-Verhage which appeared in The Palimpsest, Volume 76, Number 4. Photos of Anne and Margot Frank and letter: Courtesy of the Library/Archives of the Simon Wiesenthal Center Museum of Tolerance. Juanita and Betty Ann Wagner photos: Courtesy Betty Ann Wagner.

A Young Girl's Legacy

Anne Frank

Anne Frank kept a diary while in hiding from the Nazis during World War II. She addressed her entries to an imaginary friend named Kitty and described her fears about growing up, falling in love, and being misunderstood by her parents. She also wrote as a Jew hiding from the Nazis as war raged outside. Through it all, she believed people were inherently "good at heart."

When German soldiers plundered the Secret Annex, they left Anne's diary on the floor. Interested only in jewels and other items of value, they discarded what appeared to be a meaningless childhood relic. But the powerful words of an adolescent girl outlived their atrocities. Her wish, as recorded in her diary, "to go on living even after my death" had come true with the publication of her diary in 1947. Since then, *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl* has been translated into more than 30 languages, performed as a play and made into a movie.

Margot Frank

The Wagners moved to California in 1946. Ten years later, Betty Ann heard a review on her car radio of a hit Broadway play called *The Diary of Anne Frank*. "What an emotional and humbling experience to read her diary," Betty Ann recalled. Over the years, Betty Ann's letter from Otto Frank had been misplaced, but the 1940 letters from Anne and Margot survived.

In 1988, Betty Ann showed the letters to a friend who insisted the letters should be in a museum. Betty Ann and Juanita decided to auction them. "How would anyone know the value or to whom to give them?" they wondered.

The letters sold for $150,000 to an anonymous buyer who then donated them to the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles.

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Wartime Letter Writing CENSORED!

by Millie K. Frese

Letters kept Gib Schlarbaum and his family close during WW II. At right, Ferne and Gary visit Gib before he leaves for India.

Gib Schlarbaum of Van Horne was drafted in December 1942. He trained with the 14th Armor Division in Arkansas, then at Army/Air Corps bases in Mississippi, Texas and Michigan before being sent overseas.

In 1944, Gib boarded an airplane in New York carrying sealed orders. "I couldn't open my orders until the plane was in the air," Gib said. Once airborne, he tore open the envelope to discover he'd be stationed in Calcutta, India.

Gib's wife, Ferne, and their son (Gary was born two months after Gib was drafted) visited him in Michigan prior to his departure. "We left Gib in Michigan and didn't hear from him for a long time," Ferne said. "It was terrible not knowing where he was."

"I wrote home every day while over there," Gib said. "I don't know what I wrote about. There wasn't much news to tell." His letters, like all others written by U.S. soldiers, were censored. He was forbidden to write news of the war, discuss his work or disclose his location.

"He wrote about the boy who washed his clothes and polished his shoes," Ferne described. "He told me about the tents he slept in and the movies he went to."

"There were movies shown on base almost every night," Gib explained.

"He wrote about how much he missed me, and he asked a lot of questions about Gary," Ferne said.

Loose Lips Sink Ships

Wartime slogans like this reminded people in the U.S. not to talk about troop locations, strategies or ship movements. The information could endanger U.S. soldiers if spies overheard the conversation.

Every envelope Gib sent home was stamped with the censoring officer's name. "Captain Anderson read every word," Gib stated. Censors deleted anything they believed might give the enemy clues about Allied troop locations or strategies. Soldiers couldn't describe things like

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weather conditions or scenery because such details might lead the enemy to them.

"I was pretty careful," Gib said. "I knew what I could and could not write about." He understood why his letters were read by a censor but did not like having someone else read them.

Ferne wrote to Gib every day, too. "I wrote a letter every evening, then walked uptown to mail it the next morning," Ferne recalled. The daily ritual kept their family connected. "I wrote about everything–every detail–of what happened at home with Gary so Gib would know his son," she said.

Though they wrote every day, the letters arrived in bunches, usually out of order. "But that didn't matter," Ferne said. She read Gib's letters over and over, as he did hers.

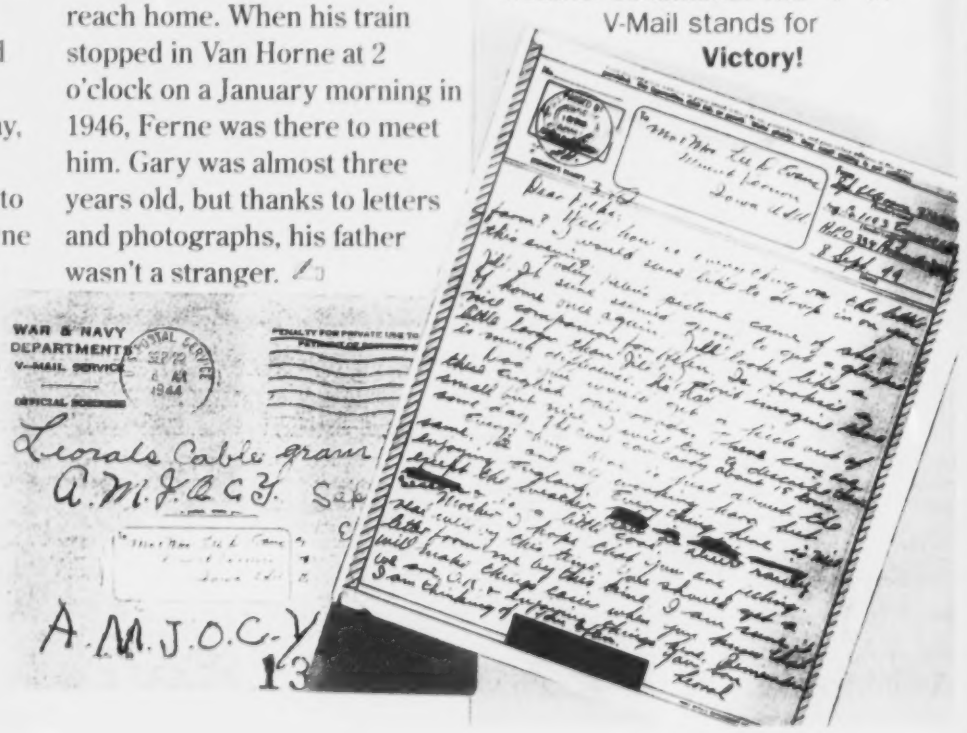
Gib, who describes himself as "just an enlisted man," was awarded the bronze star for his service in India. And he still keeps in touch with some of the men with whom he served through phone calls and an occasional letter. "It's good to talk with someone who's been there...who knows what it was like."

After the war, it took Gib 30 days on a ship to get back to the U.S., then a long train ride to reach home. When his train stopped in Van Horne at 2 o'clock on a January morning in 1946, Ferne was there to meet him. Gary was almost three years old, but thanks to letters and photographs, his father wasn't a stranger.

Photos Courtesy of Ruthanne Schlarbaum
Letter Courtesy of Mr. and Mrs. Lenral Evans

The Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor in Hawaii on December 7, 1941 propelled the United States into World War II. By then Nazi leader Adolf Hitler had conquered most of Europe. Americans joined "The Allies" fighting against Hitler and other "Axis" powers in European, Asian, African and Pacific theaters of military activity. For U.S. soldiers deployed overseas, letter writing maintained a vital link with the families and friends they left behind.

Notice the censor's stamp in the upper left corner of this, WWII letter. The censor crossed out the writer's references to weather conditions. The "V" in V-Mail stands for **Victory!**



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Letters of the T.P.C.

By Debra Atkinson

Imagine having a pen pal for over fifty years. And not just one, but eleven! So it was for twelve young women who attended Iowa State College (now Iowa State University) between 1918 and 1922.

The "round robin" began in 1922, shortly after the women left I.S.C. in Ames, Iowa. Envelopes plump with letters circulated among the twelve friends for at least fifty-four years. The letters traveled from one friend to another in a continuous circle. Each recipient in turn read the letters, added a new one of her own, then mailed the bundle of letters on to the next pen pal. The correspondence carried a lifetime of triumphs and tragedies.

The twelve women attended college at a time when students packed their belongings in heavy steamer trunks in the fall and traveled by train to campus. They usually returned home only for Christmas and summer breaks. Developing new friendships helped them adjust to life away from home.

Young women going to college in 1918 were likely the first in their families to do so. Their world was different from the one their mothers and grandmothers knew. Rapidly changing times meant more opportunities for women in higher education, work, social clubs and fashion. Women who chose to marry and have families still experienced fewer boundaries than previous generations.

The paths of the soon-to-be pen pals crossed often at I.S.C. They all lived at East Hall, and nine of them were members of the Quill Literary Society. Among the group, Marjorie, Anvy, and Eleanor had known each other before college. Blanche and Mae were sisters. Otherwise their friendships began in college.

Scrapbooks the women kept show pictures of some or all of the group with captions that read, "The Family," or "The Twelve." On autograph pages and in other photos they also refer to themselves as "The T.P.C." The initials are a mystery, their meaning a secret the group members guarded. A wedding announcement of Marjorie's reads, "...dinner was served by Eleanor and Helen, who were T.P.C. sisters of the bride in college."

The group renewed its ties with annual reunions on the I.S.C. campus, holding picnics at a shelter near the Veenker golf course. Over the years the picnic grew as husbands and children accompanied the women. In later years, though, attendance declined as families moved on. The round robins' friendships spanned so many decades that they saw each other through weddings (all but one of them married), childbirth, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, illness, and loss of loved ones.

"The family" retained its close-knit ties until they could no longer write letters. The last known reunion was in 1976, 54 years after the pen pals attended college together. Letters the women wrote were lost or discarded over the years. But stories of their friendship, strengthened for decades through a round robin, survive.

Marjorie Ballou Helen Biggs
Lura Bishop

Anvy Dewell Keziah Helm
Blanche Marion Mae Marion

Ethel Severin Esther Tesene
Hope Whitman

Ready to Write?

Would you like to keep in touch with friends from camp or cousins from across the country? Why not start your own round robin!

Think up a name that describes your group or has a secret meaning. Make a list of people who want to write to each other and start writing letters.

Be sure to get your parents' permission since the envelopes will require extra postage as the bundle of letters grows.

TIPS FOR GETTING STARTED:

1. Contact people you want to include. Consider limiting your group to 10 or fewer members. The members should know each other and have a parent's consent. Promise to keep the robin flying by responding within a week.

2. Make a name & address list, putting your name first. Make copies of the list for everyone.

3. Write your first letter! Place it in an envelope with the name/address lists. Address the envelope to the person after you on the list (you will always send to this person) and send it on its way.

4. Each pen pal will take a copy of the address list, read the letters, put them in a new envelope, add his or her own letter, and mail it to the next person on the list. The last person on the list will send it back to you. Read all the letters, remove your old one, add a new letter, and send the packet around again.

Include your photograph, a poem, or some artwork with your letter. Be creative! The hardest part is waiting for the letters to return to you!

by Debra Atkinson

Round robin originally meant a petition with signatures arranged in a circle so no one would know the order in which the names were signed. Sailors used this method when registering a written complaint so no individual could be charged with leading a mutiny. In 17th-century France, government officials devised a method of signing grievances on ribbons that were attached to documents in a circular form. That way, no signer could get his head chopped off for signing first! They called it *ruban rond*, or "round ribbon." *Ruban rond* eventually became *round robin* in English and became associated with a method of circulating letters between several people. Messages were sent from person to person with each recipient adding his or her own comments.

Today, round robin is more commonly used to describe a type of sports tournament. Other uses of the term are considered obsolete. Maybe you can help revive round robin by starting your own letter exchange!

The Courier's Appointed Rounds

by Jan Wolbers

"Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds." This unofficial U.S. postal service motto mentions some of the challenges facing mail carriers. Poorly maintained roads and heavy mail loads can still cause problems for rural carriers. During the early days of rural mail delivery in Iowa, however, the "courier's appointed rounds" were sometimes nearly impossible to complete.

Stagecoach Delivery

In the 1850s, mail was not delivered directly to rural residents. Stagecoaches, which also carried passengers, delivered mail to post offices throughout Iowa. These post offices did not look anything like those in Iowa cities today. Since towns were few in number, many country farm houses also served as stage stops and post offices. Stagecoach drivers could feed and water their horses, give their passengers a chance to rest and deliver the mail all in one stop.

Mail carrier Emma Morr with her horse and buggy in Sandyville, Iowa, ca. 1915. SHSI (Iowa City)

Traveling between stage stop post offices was difficult because Iowa roads were often little more than dirt trails across the prairie. Mud, snow and ice often made travel treacherous–if not impossible–for the horse-driven stagecoaches. Nettie Bolton, a young woman who lived at a rural post office near Danville, Iowa, described road conditions in her diary, written in the late 1800s. She used words such as *muddy, sloppy, icy, drifted, impassable*, and *horrid* to describe rural roads.

Storms caused big problems for stage drivers. Snow was the worst hazard. In 1867, Charles Hale became lost in a blizzard while delivering mail to Fort Dodge. The ground was covered and Hale could not find his way in the driving snow. After wandering aimlessly for three days, he unhitched his team of horses and let them go, hoping that they would find shelter. Then he abandoned his stagecoach and walked. Hale spent four days and four nights lost in the prairie before finding a farm house where he received aid. He lost an ear and parts of both feet as a result of his ordeal. One of his horses froze to death. The other was never found.

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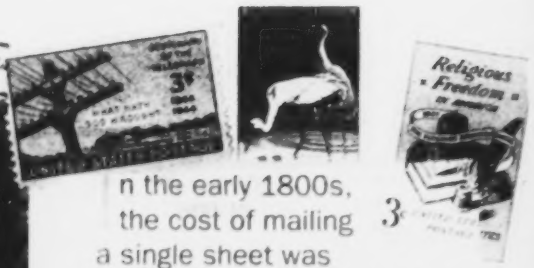
A.A. Deo was one of Stratford, Iowa's first three mail carriers in 1903.
SHSI (Iowa City)

Rural Free Delivery (RFD)

MAIL DELIVERY IMPROVED by the end of the nineteenth century. Most of the small rural post offices were replaced by larger post offices located in towns. These post offices relied upon trains, not stage-coaches, for the mail. Rural free mail delivery (RFD) to Iowans living in the country began in 1896. The first RFD route in Iowa started in Morning Sun. Four carriers were hired to deliver the mail. They each traveled an average of 23 miles–which took about six hours by horse-back! Within three years after the first route began, 21 routes were established in Iowa, serving nearly 12,000 farmers.

Ruth Hully Parrott was a young girl in the early days of RFD. She grew up on a Des Moines County farm. "The roads were awful," she remembered, "but the mailman usually managed to get through on horseback." The mail route was long and tiring, and Ruth's family often provided the carrier with a much appreciated break. "My dad would meet him at the mailbox and invite him to eat lunch with us."

Despite the obstacles, rural carriers have always found a way to complete their "appointed rounds."



In the early 1800s, the cost of mailing a single sheet was based upon the distance that the mail was carried. For example:

Not over 30 miles–6¢
Over 400 miles–25¢

Unlike today, the postage did not have to be pre-paid. The mail carrier collected the amount upon delivery. Collection was difficult; twenty-five cents was hard to come by in those days! Sometimes people sold eggs, butter or farm produce to save enough money to pay postage due.

In 1845, postal rates were based upon weight. For a letter weighing no more than one-half an ounce (300 miles or less) - 5¢. For a letter weighing no more than one half an ounce (over 300 miles) - 10¢. The cost increased according to the weight.

Finally, in 1863, an ordinary letter could be sent any distance in the United States for only 3¢! That rate didn't change until postage went up to 4¢ in 1958.

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Make a Quill Pen!

By Millie K. Frese

Until the early 1800s, students learning to write with ink on paper had to first learn how to cut their own quill pens.

Quill pens are mentioned in writings dating back to the sixth century A.D. and remained the principal writing tool for nearly 1300 years. They can be made from the outer wing feathers of any bird, but writers preferred goose, swan, crow and turkey feathers. Goose and turkey feathers were popular because the birds were raised for food, making the feathers easy to obtain.

What you'll need:

- a large feather that has hardened or dried out
- utility knife
- scissors
- straight pin
- cutting board
- bottle of ink
- paper

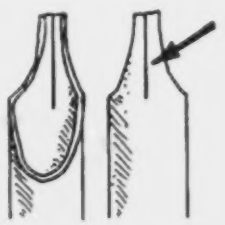
1 Ask an adult to help you cut off the end of the large feather. This cut forms the point or "nib" of your pen. You may also need to trim the feathers an inch or two up the stalk to give you plenty of room to comfortably hold your pen.

2 Clean out the inside of the feather stalk with the straight pin if necessary, being careful not to crack the nib.

3 Cutting the end of the nib at a slight angle will make it easier to use. Lay the quill face down on the cutting board.

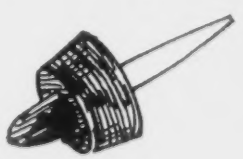
Trim it like this if you are right-handed *or* like this if you are left-handed.

Experiment with different angles until you find one that's comfortable.



4 Cut a small slit in the nib to help control the ink flow.

5 To write with your quill pen, dip the nib in ink, gently wiping it against the inside of the bottle to remove excess. Too much ink on your quill results in blotchy handwriting.



Art by Mary Moye-Rowley

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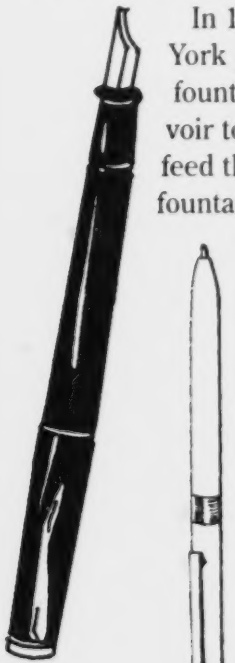
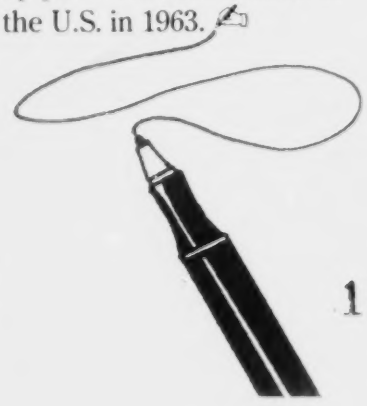
As you write, your nib will wear down. To "sharpen" your quill pen, repeat steps 1-4. Early scribes had to recut their pens frequently to maintain a sharp edge and neat lettering. They used a special tool called a penknife.

Through the 1700s, inventors experimented with materials from tortoise shells to precious stones to create pen nibs that didn't require recutting. An English engineer patented the first steel pen point in 1803. Use of the quill pen declined rapidly, although the new metal nibs still had to be dipped in ink.

In 1884, Louis Waterman of New York patented the first practical fountain pen. It contained a reservoir to hold ink and a mechanism to feed the ink smoothly to the nib. The fountain pen remained the chief writing instrument in the West until ball point pens were introduced after WWII. Felt tip pens were introduced in the U.S. in 1963.





Are you someone who freezes up after penning the salutation? Do you cringe at the thought of writing thank-you notes for all those birthday gifts you received? No matter what writing instrument you select, letter writing can be fun. The more you practice, the better you'll get at expressing yourself on paper. Soon you'll enjoy the pleasure of describing your activities, thoughts and feelings in words. Your friends and family will enjoy your letters, and you may get to know yourself a little better in the process of writing.

You don't know where to begin? That's easy! Just write the way you talk. Do you live far away from your grandparents? Tell them about that new trumpet you lugged home today and your first attempts at playing real music. Write to a friend who moved away and describe your subjects, teachers and classmates. Tell about the funny thing that happened on the playground last week. Ask lots of specific questions that show the recipient you're interested in her life—that helps generate a speedy reply! Remember to number your pages. Once you get going, it's hard to stop!

Exchanging letters with far-away friends and family members keeps relationships growing when you don't see each other very often.

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Laura and Rose
Letters Preserved in Iowa Archive

A collection of letters exchanged between Laura Ingalls Wilder and her daughter, Rose Wilder Lane, are housed in the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library in West Branch–almost by accident.

Rose wrote a biography of Herbert Hoover in 1920. After her death in 1968, the presidential library wanted her papers because of her connection to the Iowa-born president. When her "adopted" grandson–Charlottesville, Virginia, attorney Roger Lea MacBride–agreed to donate her papers to the Hoover Library in 1981, Dwight Miller, the library's senior archivist, visited Charlottesville to collect the materials. As an afterthought MacBride asked, "Do you want her mother's papers, too?"

Having the famous mother-daughter duo's papers has opened up a new audi-

"You must take into account the actual distinction between truth and fact," Rose wrote to Laura on January 21, 1938. Facts, she said, are infinite in number. "The truth is a meaning underlying them; you tell the truth by selecting the facts which illustrate it." Rose helped Laura see that she could convey the truth of her pioneer girlhood even if she didn't include all the facts.

Laura and Rose exchanged many letters as Laura wrote and Rose edited the Little House books. Laura also wrote to her sister, Grace, to sharpen memories of her pioneer girlhood.

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ence for the library, Miller said. Hoover's own letters and papers are the only collection researchers access more often.

Time has yellowed the pages Laura penned to Rose in her neat, Palmer method handwriting. Laura described ordinary things: weather conditions at Rocky Ridge farm, making curtains, her and her husband Almanzo's health, money, politics, and recipes for fancy sandwiches she planned to serve at a club meeting. In some letters Laura thanked Rose for gifts; in others, she scolded her daughter for not writing soon enough.

"The long, involved correspondence was about things the two would have discussed over the kitchen table if they had been together," Miller said.

Laura's letters to Rose also trace the origins of the Little House books, and the sometimes agonizing process of writing them.

In a letter to Rose dated February 5, 1937, Laura wrote, "Looking through my desk yesterday, I found a book Ma made of writing paper. When I put them in there I couldn't bear to read it, but I am having to live over those days with Pa and Ma anyway, so I did. Ma had written some of her own poetry in it and copied some that she liked. And Pa had written two songs..."

Perhaps digging through some of her childhood memories made Laura sad or homesick for her family and pioneer days long gone. Laura struggled to convey the truth about difficult times her family faced without overwhelming her stories with tragic details.

In December 1937 Laura wrote of her dilemma about what details of Mary's illness to include as she started *By the Shores of Silver Lake*. "I can't take Mary along in the story as she should be if she were not blind. She would not fit in. A touch of the tragedy makes the story truer to life and showing the way we all took it illustrates the spirit of the times and the frontier," Laura wrote.

"Besides, if it had not been for her blindness, she would have been the school-teacher instead of me. I never would have. I hated it, and my character in the story would not have developed into a teacher. Mary had the measles in Burr Oak and the illness, they called it brain fever, that caused her blindness was the effects of the measles."

In her books, Laura doesn't write of the year her family spent in Burr Oak, Iowa. "When we left there was not money enough to pay the last month's rent and feed us on the way back to Walnut Grove," Laura wrote in a letter dated March 23, 1937.

Rose, a respected journalist and writer, was her mother's editor. Miller describes Laura as being similar to a landscape artist. "She painted sweeping pictures," Miller said. Rose sharpened details, descriptions and added the dialogue. "Writing dialogue was hard for Laura, but came more easily for Rose."

"Be careful with the copy of Hard Winter," Laura wrote on May 23, 1939. "I mean don't lose it...it is the only copy." Laura hand copied her work before sending it to Rose. "I expect you will find lots of fault on it, but we can argue it out later."

Much love
Mama Bess

Photos courtesy Herbert Hoover Presidential Library, West Branch. Letters reproduced and quoted with permission of the Roger Lea MacBride Estate, whose assistance we acknowledge.

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History Mystery

Story by Sarah Frese
Photos by Millie Frese

WE WALKED through the door marked "Authorized Personnel Only." My authorization: I'm on special assignment as History Detective for *The Goldfinch*. Mary Evans, education specialist at the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library, led the way into a room with row after row of shelves. Each shelf was lined with gray boxes. Security cameras mounted in the ceiling watched us from all directions.

History detective Sarah Frese,10, explores the Hoover Library Archive.

Q: Why does it feel colder in here?

A: The temperature is 63 degrees, and the humidity is 58%. Old paper is highly susceptible to mold. Higher temperatures and humidity will cause mold to form–or to reactivate.

Q: What is in all of these boxes?

A: The Hoover Library holds more than 160 major collections of letters, papers and diaries. There are no objects in the archive–only papers. Most pertain to Herbert Hoover, his contemporaries, political associates, colleagues and friends. The gray boxes, called Hollinger boxes, are specially made for archival storage. Most paper contains acid and will slowly destroy itself. The acid-free boxes and the way the papers are stored within preserve them. Laura's and Rose's papers together occupy 30 linear feet.

Q: Why are there sprinklers on the ceiling? Wouldn't water ruin the documents?

A: Specially trained people can dry out wet documents. But fire consumes paper. The documents would be gone forever if we could not put out a fire.

Evans carefully removed a tablet from one of the boxes. Writing covered every page from edge to edge on both sides. There was even writing on the back cardboard cover! On the reddish cover

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was the title, "The First Three Years and A Year of Grace."

Now it was Evans' turn to ask a question: "Do you know what you are reading?"

"It's one of Laura's books!" I answered.

The manuscript I held was not published as a book until after both Laura and Rose died. The last book in the Little House series, it was retitled *The First Four Years*.

"It tells about sad times in Laura's life," Evans said. "Maybe Laura wrote it as therapy. She never intended it to be published."

Q: Why did Laura write with pencil on tablets?

A: Laura did not own a typewriter. Some people described her as frugal. She didn't waste any space. When she finished writing each of her books, she mailed the tablets to Rose. Rose edited the stories. Sometimes Laura complained about Rose "running the stories through her typewriter." She did not always like the changes Rose made.

Q: Why did Laura sign her letters *Mama Bess*?

A: One day an aunt, also named Laura, came to stay with the Wilders. Having two Lauras in the house was confusing, so Laura went by 'Bess'–a nickname for Elizabeth which was her middle name.

Little House in the Big Woods was not Laura's first book. "Did you know that her first book was a flop?" Evans asked. Laura wrote *Pioneer Girl* for adults, but publishers rejected it.

"She could have given up–but she didn't," Evans said. "Even though she was more than 60 years old, she decided to try something new."

No one had ever written a series of books for children before. But Laura did it, expanding each chapter of *Pioneer Girl* into a book for kids. The first, *Little House in the Big Woods*, was a huge success. It won lots of awards–and generated a ton of mail.

"That's when Laura and Almanzo bought the biggest mailbox you have ever seen," Evans said. "A kindergartner could have crawled into it!" Kids wrote to Laura demanding to know what happened next.

What happened next is...HISTORY!

Mary Evans, education specialist at the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library in West Branch, talks to *The Goldfinch* history detective.

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HISTORY MAKERS

Fourth-grade students at West Liberty Middle School are making friends through letter writing. They write letters to students, staff, and faculty of the University of Iowa in Iowa City.

Karina Camarillo, UI student, coordinates the exchange for Opportunity at Iowa, a university organization committed to maintaining diversity on campus. The pen pal exchange provides elementary students with positive role models. It helps keep them interested in school and gets them to start thinking about college.

Fourth-grade teacher Belita Kruse hands Maria Zamora a letter from her University of Iowa pen pal.

West Liberty students and university pen pals filled out information sheets about themselves. Camarillo then paired pen pals, matching interests such as sports, hobbies or food. The pen pals exchange nine letters throughout the school year.

"The letter format is really kind of free-style," Camarillo said. "That way kids can write about as much or as little as they want. They can write about anything."

For those who can't think of anything to write about, the program sets up themes or topics for every letter. Pen pals may write about what they like to read, favorite music or movie, or their family and friends.

Maria Zamora, 10, has a simple definition of what the pen pal program is all about. "You learn about them and they learn about you," she said.

West Liberty teachers like letter writing just as much as the students.

"It enhances all language arts skills, all the writing skills," said Nancy Ekwall, who teaches fourth grade. "Sentence structure, capitalization, punctuation."

The pen pal program complements a letter writing unit in West Liberty's fourth-grade curriculum. Ekwall's class makes letter writing for the program a part of the regular school day.

"So many people communicate through e-mail now, that letter writing could become a lost art," Ekwall said. "I just feel it's important to keep those actual writing skills."

"Society's changing so much, even handwriting skills soon will be obsolete," predicted Belita Kruse, a fourth-grade teacher who also acts as

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the program's mail carrier. Letters from UI pen pals are sent to Kruse who then distributes the letters to eager young readers.

Camden Hahn, 9, likes to take a break from handwriting sometimes and type letters on the computer. However, technology has some disadvantages.

"The computers are sort of hard because you have to look for the letter you want," said Yvette Aguero, 10.

Some students have written letters before they started the program and others haven't. Aguero and Zamora both write to family and friends in Mexico. In addition to her university pen pal, 9-

Yvette Aguero holds a photo of her pen pal.

year-old Kayla Wiele has a pen pal outside of Iowa. Having pen pals some distance away is a definite plus in Kayla's book.

"I like it because you can talk to other people about stuff that you can't talk to your best friends because they might tell other people," Wiele said.

Marvin Loya writes to his grandmother.

Jason Feldman, 9, said the best part of having a pen pal is getting letters. Hahn agreed.

"I like to find out what they say," said Hahn.

Marvin Loya, 9, knows that what's written in letters can become history.

"Letters by famous people a long time ago might tell history, or letters you got one month ago or one week ago," Loya said.

Courtney Aber, 9, suggests where to look for history in a letter.

"Sometimes they put a lot of good news in the middle of the letter," Aber said.

By looking at the date, address, and content of letters, everyone agreed that letters are a good way to explore history.

This is the second year that West Liberty has participated in a pen pal exchange with the University of Iowa. The school has about 80 students involved in the program. The university also has pen pal exchanges with Grant Wood Elementary in Cedar Rapids and Lincoln Elementary in Waterloo.

–story by Lin Ly

–photos by Matthew J. Palmiotto

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Logan's Letters

by Millie Frese

Logan Maguire studied his ruddy image in the distorted mirror glass. A flickering lamp cast eerie shadows on the wall. He dipped his hands into the basin on the washstand, splashing his face with icy water. It stung, but he barely noticed.

Today, Logan and his parents would leave for America. They would leave behind their possessions (*there wasn't much*, Logan thought), their home (*it wasn't really their home anymore since they'd been unable to pay the rent*) and their family and friends.

Saying goodbye to Liam, his best friend, was hardest of all. They promised to write, but Logan knew this was unlikely. Paper, envelopes and postage stamps cost money neither of them had.

Perhaps Logan and his family would leave behind the hard times, too.

The Maguires hadn't seriously considered leaving Ireland until the letter from Quinn arrived:

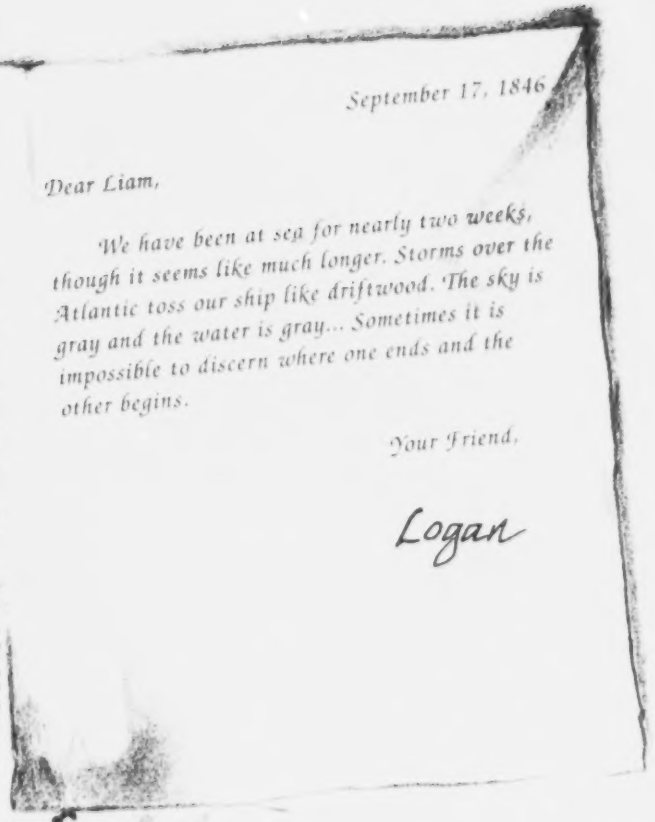
Dear Uncle Richard,

You must leave Ireland at once and sail for America. I have settled on rich farmland west of the Mississippi River in Iowa territory. The work is hard, but the land is ours!

Father was accustomed to hard work. He'd always been able to earn a living. Before the potato crop failed and he couldn't find work. Before people in their village began to starve.

Could sunrise in Iowa be as beautiful as it is here? he wondered as they waited to board the American ship docked in the harbor. Logan pulled his journal out of his knapsack. The pages were so crisp, his new pen sleek. And there was a whole bottle of ink! He wanted to capture this moment and take it with him. All of the beauty, anticipation, mystery and sadness spilled onto the pages as he wrote. Logan struggled to find words to say goodbye to the only home he'd ever known.

Mother taught Logan to read and write when he was very young. Father didn't think formal



September 17, 1846

Dear Liam,

We have been at sea for nearly two weeks, though it seems like much longer. Storms over the Atlantic toss our ship like driftwood. The sky is gray and the water is gray... Sometimes it is impossible to discern where one ends and the other begins.

Your Friend,

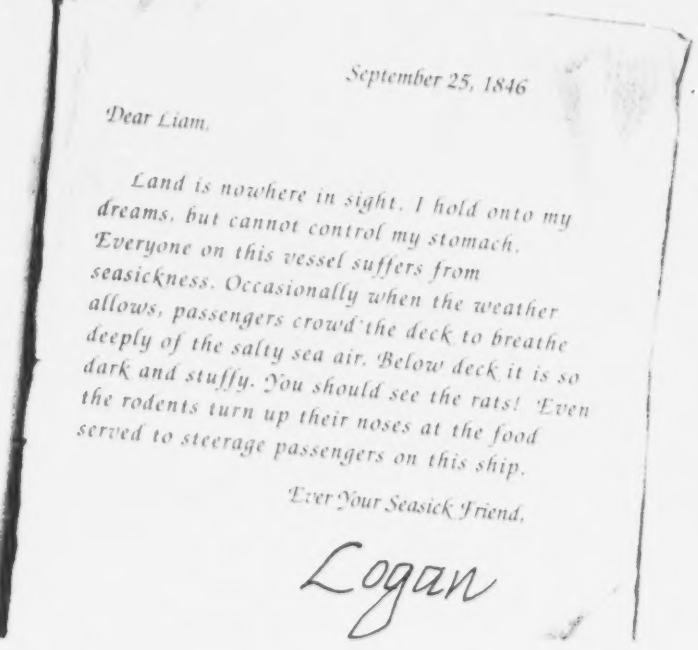
Logan

schooling was necessary. "A strong back and the willingness to work hard—that's all a man needs to survive," Father asserted. Logan wanted so much to learn everything, to be a writer. A poet. Father scoffed at Logan's desire. "You can't eat words," Father said whenever Logan spoke of his dreams.

That's why these gifts stunned him so. Maybe the hard times had convinced Father that strength alone was not enough.

"This is a time for dreaming," Father said as he handed the journal, pen and ink to Logan. "For now, dreams are all we have."

Logan decided to write every day as though he was talking to Liam. Then his friend wouldn't seem so far away.



September 25, 1846

Dear Liam,

Land is nowhere in sight. I hold onto my dreams, but cannot control my stomach. Everyone on this vessel suffers from seasickness. Occasionally when the weather allows, passengers crowd the deck to breathe deeply of the salty sea air. Below deck it is so dark and stuffy. You should see the rats! Even the rodents turn up their noses at the food served to steerage passengers on this ship.

Ever Your Seasick Friend,

Logan

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Dear Liam, October 1, 1846

We are growing accustomed to life at sea. Every day we speak to others bound for territories west of the Mississippi River, which some people call "The Father of Water." That seems a strange name for a river when we are adrift on a merciless ocean! Everyone clutches letters from family who are already settled in America. Some say the best route to take is to disembark in Philadelphia then go by train to Pittsburgh then over the Ohio River to the mouth of the Mississippi. Then to St. Louis. Then to Burlington in Iowa. Others say the best route is to go to New Orleans then up the Mississippi. But that means more time at sea, so I hope we will travel through Philadelphia.

Your New World Navigator,

Logan

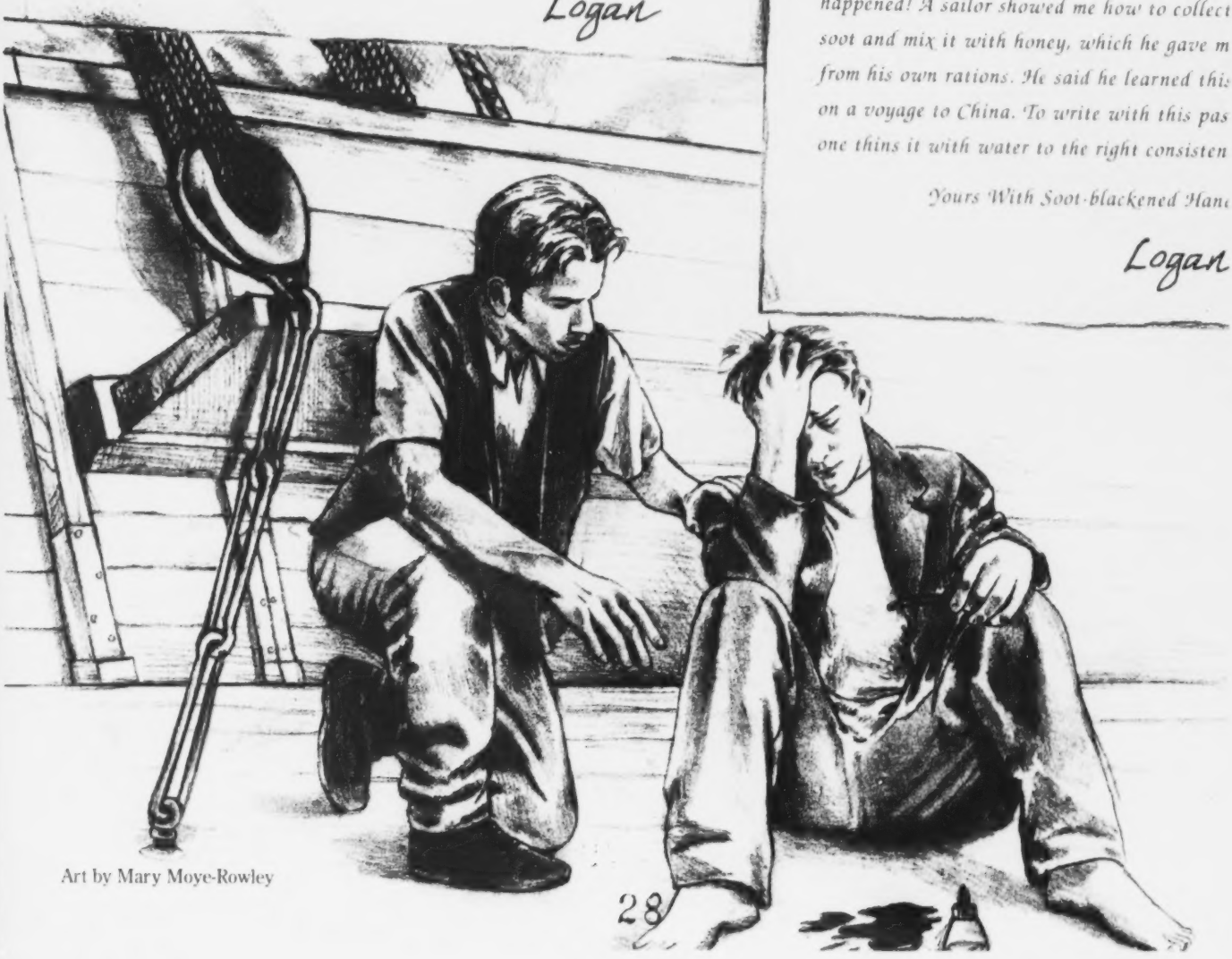
October 10, 184

Dear Liam,

Yesterday was a disaster. While on deck writing to you, the ship suddenly lurched, tipping over my ink bottle and spilling every precious drop! I'm ashamed to say that I sobbed like an infant. Imagine a 12-year-old boy sobbing over spilt ink. But then a miracl happened! A sailor showed me how to collect soot and mix it with honey, which he gave m from his own rations. He said he learned this on a voyage to China. To write with this pas one thins it with water to the right consisten

Yours With Soot-blackened Hand

Logan



Art by Mary Moye-Rowley

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October 17, 1856

Dear Liam,

We have landed in America! It is so good to stand on solid ground.

Your Land-loving Comrade,

Logan

November 5, 1856

Dear Liam,

We traveled the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers and are now in Burlington. Quinn is to meet us in Muscatine next week. We will arrive before him if the mild weather holds.

Wishing You Were Here
to Ride The Father of Water,

Logan

November 24, 1846

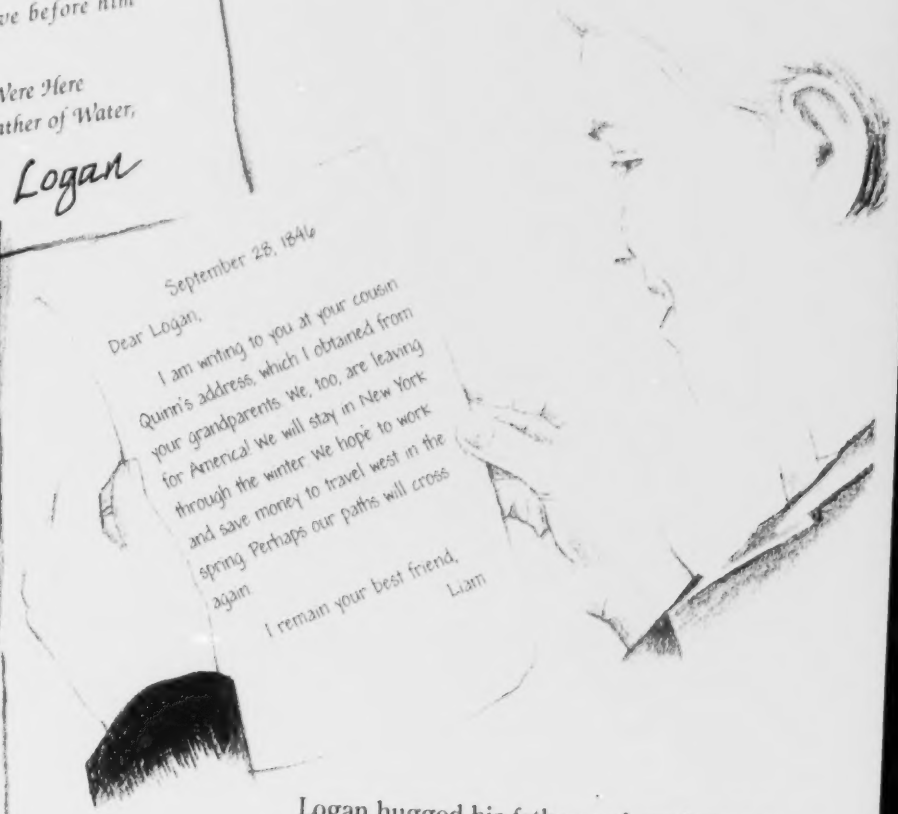
Dear Liam,

We are comfortably settled in Quinn's log cabin in Cedar County. Yesterday Father and Quinn finished building a lean-to on the side of the cabin to help make space for us. This morning nearly a foot of snow covered the ground. Mother is making stew over the crackling fire. Quinn laid up enough provisions to get us all through the winter. He says this is the country for a poor man. If you are willing to work, you will not starve. By next year at this time, we will own our own land, too. Think of it!

Logan looked up from his now-tattered journal just as Father burst through the cabin door in a swirl of snow.

"A letter has arrived—for Logan!" Father's voice boomed.

Logan carefully opened the letter which was cleverly folded to form its own envelope.



September 28, 1846

Dear Logan,

I am writing to you at your cousin Quinn's address, which I obtained from your grandparents. We, too, are leaving for America! We will stay in New York through the winter. We hope to work and save money to travel west in the spring. Perhaps our paths will cross again.

I remain your best friend,
Liam

Logan hugged his father and mother and cousin, then hugged them all again. This truly was a land of miracles.

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Dear Diary...

by Lisa Ly

Clara ca. 1905

Clara Hinton grew up in Hedrick, Iowa. When her mother died in 1902, Clara's family left their farm to live near her grandparents in town. Only eight at the time, Clara helped her father keep house and care for her four younger siblings. Letters were a part of Clara's everyday life — not just because she liked to write them but also because her father was a mail carrier! Clara detailed letter writing and her father's job in her diary.

July 29, 1906
Ruth didn't know what papa meant when he said male quartette. She thought he meant mail ''. She said "Benson Young's?" Because he has a mail route and papa is his substitute.

August 20, 1906
I wrote to Aunt Bell & to the Baptist Record. Pella Iowa.

August 29, 1906
My letter ...wasn't printed in last weeks Record. I sent it too late I guess.

Feb. 23, 1907
Wrote letter to Aunt Maud & Jessie P.M. Papa and Ruth went to town. Ruth got a new Bible. She went to Parrott's at 3:50 and Edna telephoned over and nothing would do but for her to stay an hour. We all went to church. Bell absent, Hold ant. No one joined. Ruth and I mailed the letter to Jessie.

March 4, 1907
Papa went on the route for Jacob Lindsey, Route 2.

March 29, 1907
Papa on Oliver Wilcox'es route. He goes past Uncle Billy's.

March 30, 1907
Papa went to Grandpa Hints. We kids did too and then went on to the train to Uncle Billy's. Papa went on route (Wilcoxs). Kinda chilly. Went to the pond etc. Helped set out onions. Papa got there on the route about 3 o'clock. Ruth got in and came home with him. We went to the train at 4 o'clock and had to wait at the station till 5 o'clock P.M. We beat papa home.

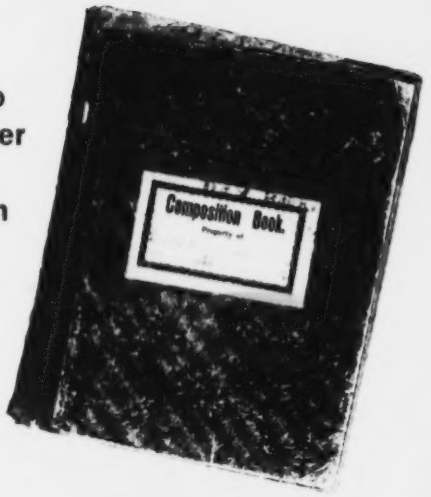
April 29, 1907
Gene & I are not at school. We are sick. I wrote to Sylvia today. (Clara notes that she also wrote to Aunt Bell and Aunt Maud.)

May 10, 1907
Got a letter from Audrey & Gladys Eastburn, and wrote one to Aunt Bell. Gene got a "Birthday, Picture, postal card" from Madge.

May 18, 1907
Audrey & Helen Cecil were at Bowlins. Then Velna Dean came there. Then '' & Helen & Audrey came to see me, and told me "Marie Baker said I hadn't better write to you because you had the chicken pox."

June 5, 1907
Uncle Billy had some letter writing tablet & envelopes printed with "Lake View Farm. W.C. Lotspeich, proprioter" on it.

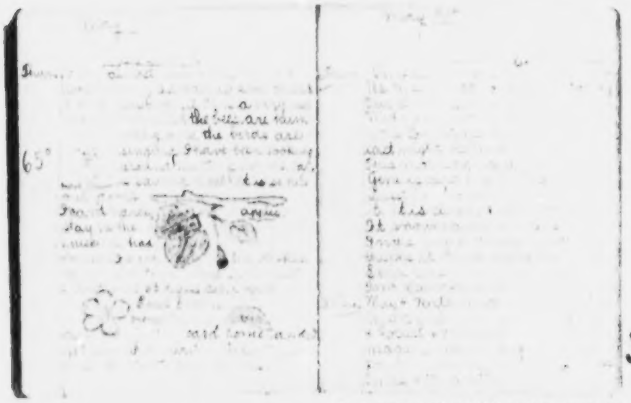
Be a diary detective



Throughout her life, Clara saved over 2400 letters she wrote to and received from family members. Clara's family considered her the family archivist and gave back letters she sent to them. Clara had 27 diaries and more than 1000 letters from friends in her collection. She thought writing was worth the expense of paper, ink and pencils. Why do you think Clara saved all those letters and diaries? What does that tell us about Clara? You can find answers to these questions and more in the diary entries you just read!

1. **Name the different mail routes Clara's father did. Which one do you think Clara's family enjoyed the most?**

2. **Why would Clara want to publish her letter to the Baptist Record? Why wasn't it published?**



Diary perserved in SHSI archive, Iowa City

3. **Explain how Clara and her siblings beat their father home on March 30, 1907.**

4. **Why do you think Clara wrote letters when she was sick?**

5. **Why didn't Marie want to write a letter to Clara?**

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Griffith Buck's Letter

by Diane Nelson

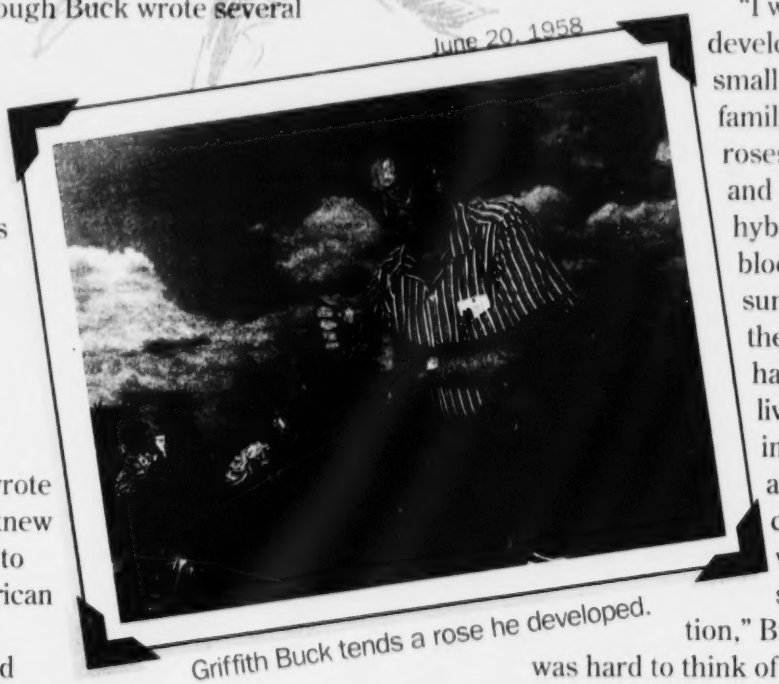
Griffith Buck solved many problems during his lifetime, but one he faced in high school in the early 1930s changed his life. He was trying to complete a Spanish class pen pal assignment. Although Buck wrote several letters, no one replied.

But Buck was persistent and curious. While browsing in the public library he picked up a book about roses and was enjoying the color photographs when he noticed frequent references to "Pedro Dot"–a Spanish name! After reading that Señor Dot lived in Barcelona, Spain, Buck wrote him a letter asking if he knew someone who would like to correspond with an American student. Then he waited.

Finally, the long-awaited envelope arrived. The letter inside was from Pedro Dot's niece, Maria Antonia. Buck passed the class, and he and Maria exchanged letters for several years. Maria's letters included notes from her uncle.

"He got me interested in roses," Buck later said. "At that time I had no intention of getting into any kind of plant breeding. I was going to be an education administrator. But I learned about roses just to answer his messages."

Buck did more than just learn about roses. During his 35-year career at Iowa State University he developed more than 85 varieties of roses. In 1977 he was invited to take one of his roses to the National Inventors' Week exposition at the patent office in Washington, D.C.



Griffith Buck tends a rose he developed.

"I wanted to develop a rosebush small enough for a family garden, with roses that looked and smelled like hybrid teas, and bloomed all summer and into the fall, but were hardy enough to live many years in the Midwest and other cold climates without special protection," Buck said. "It was hard to think of myself as an inventor and my plants as inventions."

Although Dr. Buck died in 1991, his roses live on at Reiman Gardens in Ames, at the Iowa Arboretum near Madrid, and in gardens around the U.S. They prove that you never know where a letter might lead you!

Photo Courtesy of Mrs. Griffith Buck

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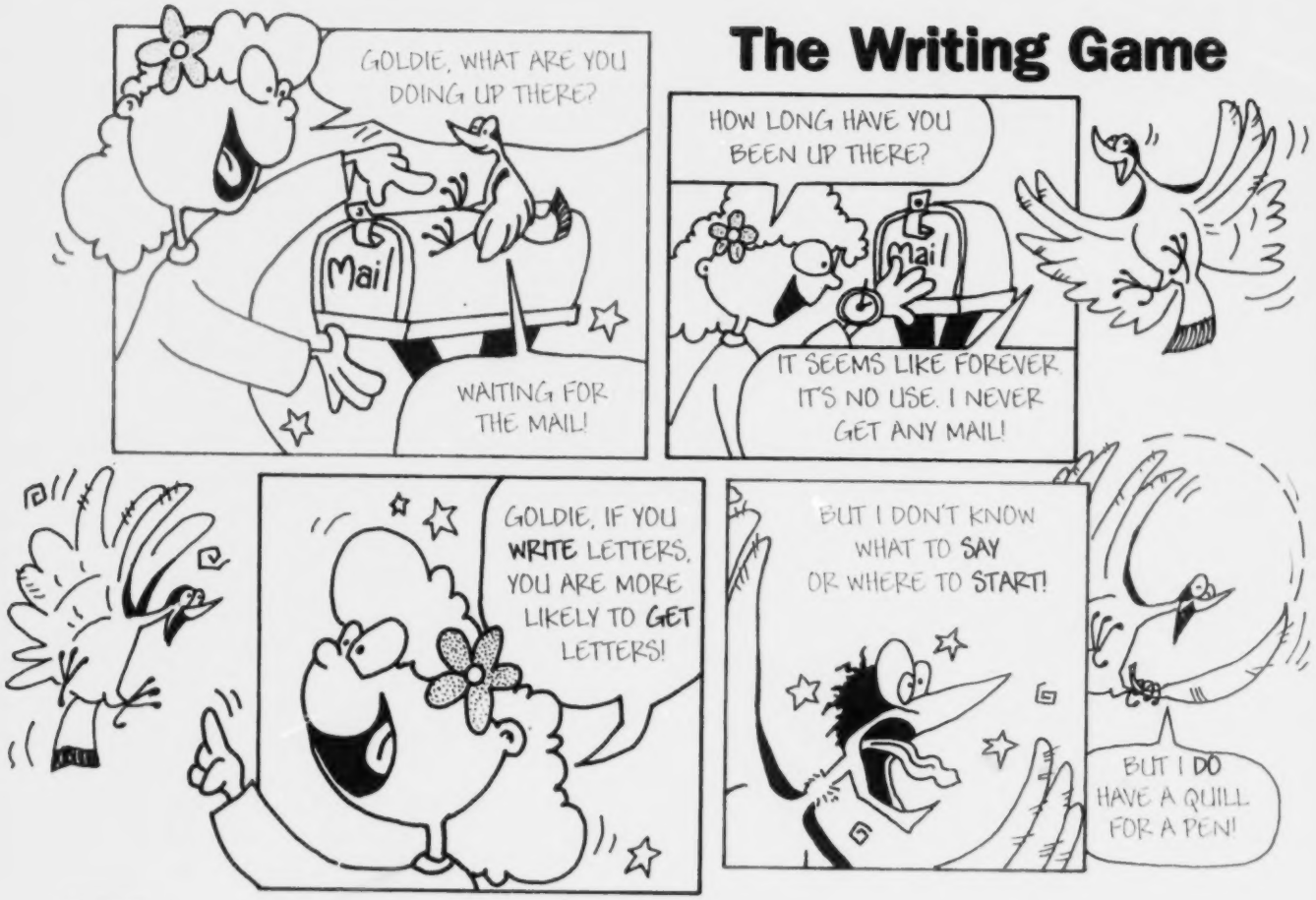
The Writing Game


GOLDIE, WHAT ARE YOU DOING UP THERE?
Mail
WAITING FOR THE MAIL!
HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN UP THERE?
Mail
IT SEEMS LIKE FOREVER. IT'S NO USE. I NEVER GET ANY MAIL!
GOLDIE, IF YOU WRITE LETTERS, YOU ARE MORE LIKELY TO GET LETTERS!
BUT I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY OR WHERE TO START!
BUT I DO HAVE A QUILL FOR A PEN!

Rosie knew just the game to get her friend started. Rather than Goldie writing a whole letter by himself, Rosie suggests the two of them take turns adding words to one letter. By rolling a game die, they'll know how many words to write during their turns. For instance, if Rosie rolls a five, she writes five words. Then it's Goldie's turn. Let's say Goldie rolls a one. Goldie can add only one more word to Rosie's sentence, or he can start a new sentence. Goldie and Rosie have fun playing this game–and soon their letter is finished.

You can try their game, too! Any number of friends and family members may play. Decide who will receive the letter. It could be any friend, other relatives, or even *The Goldfinch!* You can start your letter by telling about the game. Wild Rosie and Goldie predict it'll be a big hit!

– Lin Ly

Adapted from: Peggy Kaye's Games for Writing

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THE Goldfinch

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